

Oscar Steffens House  
7631 North Sheridan Road  
southeast corner Sheridan  
Road and Rogers Avenue  
Chicago  
Cook County  
Illinois

HABS No. ILL-1063

HABS  
ILL,  
16-CHIC,  
64-

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
*Reduced Copies of Measured Drawings*

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation  
National Park Service  
1730 North Lynn Street  
Arlington, Virginia

## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. ILL-1063

## OSCAR STEFFENS HOUSE

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Location: 7631 North Sheridan Road; southeast corner of Sheridan Road and Rogers Avenue, Chicago; Cook County, Illinois.

Present Owner: O. W. Howell Enterprises.

Present Use: House was razed in April, 1963.

Statement of Significance: This house, designed by Frank Lloyd Wright, is a later version of the Isabel Roberts house in Oak Park. Both structures are small versions of the "Prairie House" with revolving spaces around a central fireplace in individually articulated wings.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

## A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners: Legal description of the property: Lot 12 and North 25 feet of lot 13, block D - a subdivision of block 1 of Birchwood Beach of a fraction of the northwest quarter of section 29, township 41 north, range 14 east.

The following information was obtained from the chain of title contained in Book 593B, pp. 22-23, in the Cook County Recorder's Office (Recorder of Deeds):

The property was purchased by Katherine B. Steffens and she was issued a warantee deed on August 12, 1908. The property was sold to Otto C. Bach on August 26, 1912. Upon Bach's death the will was probated and through a series of court involvements his widow, Louise, obtained property September 10, 1931. Louise Bach died and property went to son, Otto K. Bach, in December, 1960. Otto K. Bach sold property to O. W. Howell Enterprises January 28, 1963.

2. Date of erection: 1909.
3. Architect: Frank Lloyd Wright.
4. Builders, suppliers, etc.: Unknown.
5. Original plans, construction, etc.: There is no available information on the original plans. Nor is there reference to the structure in the Building Permit files of the city of Chicago, except for notes on some minor work on the mechanical system.

6. Additions and alterations: The building had undergone extensive alteration and change over the years. This had included the use of the building as a restaurant for close to thirty years prior to its demolition.

See Architectural Information for a description of the physical alterations which had been made.

B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

No information was located concerning Steffens. Otto Bach was a brother of Emil Bach, for whom Wright designed a house at 7415 North Sheridan Road in 1915. (See HABS No. ILL-1088.) The two brothers, along with additional members of the family, owned and operated a concern known as the Bach Brick Company.

C. Bibliography:

Frank Lloyd Wright Ausgeführte Bauten. Wasmuth, Berlin: 1911. pp. 61, 85.

Floor plan is mislocated under Evans house.

Hitchcock, Henry-Russell. In the Nature of Materials - The Buildings of Frank Lloyd Wright, 1887-1941. New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1942. p. 118.

Kaufmann, Edgar and Raeburn, Ben. Frank Lloyd Wright: Writings and Buildings. New York: Meridian Books, 1960. p. 341.

Wijdeveld, T. J. The Work of Frank Lloyd Wright (The Great Wendigen Edition). New York: Horizon Press Re-issue, 1965. p. 52.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: An early, smaller Frank Lloyd Wright house, reminiscent of the Isabel Roberts house.
2. Condition of fabric: Demolished, 1963.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all Dimensions: Irregular rectangle; 55'-0" x 77'-9"; two stories.
2. Wall construction, finish and color: Originally the material was a cream colored stucco with dark brown wooden trim. At the time when the structure was razed, the walls had been

resurfaced with grey asbestos shingles; the window trim and fascia still exposed were painted red.

3. Structural framing: Balloon frame.
4. Porches: An open porch in the north wing of the first floor had, prior to demolition, been enclosed.
5. Chimneys: Large central chimney serving two fireplaces and furnace.
6. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: The main entrance was at the north end of the south wing, next to a projected living room wing. The service entrance was located at the southeast corner of the east wing.
  - b. Windows: At the time when the structure was razed, there still existed a large number of casement units with glazing in a "T-Square and Triangle" design, typical of this period of Wright's work. All units in the house were originally casement and outswinging (electroplated with copper following fabrication).
7. Roof:
  - a. Shape, covering: Hipped roof with asphalt shingles.
  - b. Cornice, eaves: Wide overhanging eaves with built-in gutter and plaster soffit.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:
  - a. First floor: The west wing contained a two-story living room, the north wing a porch (later enclosed), and the south wing the dining room. The east wing contained a kitchen, laundry, heater room and storage rooms.
  - b. Second floor: Only over the east wing and living room were there two floors. There was a small balcony on three sides of the living room (east side above central fireplace and half the distance on the north and south walls from the east wall). The remainder of the floor contained a master bedroom on the north and a servant's bedroom on the south with two additional bedrooms (on the southeast and northeast corner). A bathroom was located on the east exterior wall between the two corner bedrooms.

2. Stairways: One stair to second floor which began between the living room and dining room and went up next to the fireplace.
3. Flooring: At the time when the structure was razed, all flooring was either asphalt tile or concrete.
4. Wall and Ceiling finish: Cream colored sand plaster with dark brown wooden trim. Much of this had been repainted by the time the structure was razed.
5. Doorways and doors: When the structure was demolished, most of the doorways and wooden trim had been painted the same color as the adjacent walls. Originally, they were natural wood.
6. Lighting: Electrical.
7. Heating: Central.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The building faced west on the east side of North Sheridan Road. The house was in an area which was gradually going from single-family to multiple-family dwellings. As a result, it was demolished in 1963, and a new high-rise apartment structure is scheduled to replace it.
2. Landscaping and walks: At the time the structure was razed, all evidence of landscaping and walk development had ceased to exist. With the exception of a short walk up to the front door from the front of the living room wing, the site was a parking lot.

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